Trusteeship

M. K. Gandhi

NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD – 380 014

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Public.Resource.Org

https://archive.org/details/mkbook1700mkga

TRUSTEESHIP

By
M. K. GANDHI

Compiled by
RAVINDRA KELEKAR

NAVAJIVAN PUBLISING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD-14

Rupees Ten

© Navajivan Trust, 1960

First Edition, 10,000 Copies, April 1960
Tenth Reprint, 3,000 Copies, November 2015
Total: 40,000 Copies

Price of this book is
subsidised by Navajivan Trust

ISBN 978-81-7229-091-7

Printed and Published by
Vivek Jitendra Desai
Navajivan Publishing House
Ahmedabad 380 014, INDIA
Phone: 079-27540635, 27542634

E-mail: sales@navajivantrust.org
Website: www.navajivantrust.org

Contents

1.	Fundamental Law Of Nature	5
2.	Theory Of Trusteeship	7
3.	The Problem Of The Rich	9
4.	Riches Not Necessarily Impure	14
5.	Economic Equality	16
6.	Doctrine Of Equal Distribution	18
7.	Trusteeship—Not A Legal Fiction	22
8.	Labour Should Know Its Strength	24
9.	Choice Before Capitalists	27
10.	The Non-violent Sanction	29
11.	Some Questions	31
12.	Not Waiting Till Greek Kalends (By Pyarelal)	33
13.	Practical Trusteeship Formula (By Pyarelal)	39

My theory of trusteeship is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it... No other theory is compatible with non-violence.

Harijan, 16-12-1939, p. 376 [Ch. 2, p. 8]

I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence difficult to attain. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort.

Constructive Programme, Edn. 1948, p. 20–21 [Ch. 5, p. 16]

CHAPTER I

FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF NATURE

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-today, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving. I am no Socialist and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions; but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of Ahimsa. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India we have got three millions of people having to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it, and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these three millions are clothed and fed better. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, 4th Edn., pp. 384–85

Enjoy Thy Wealth by Renouncing It

The rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective *mantram* is: तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः। (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Expanded it means: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

I see coming the day of the rule of the poor; whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence. Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting.

Harijan, 1-2-1942, p. 20

To take something from another without his permission is theft of course. But it is also theft to use a thing for a purpose different from the one intended by the lender or to use it for a period longer than that which has been fixed with him. The profound truth upon which this observance is based is that God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. Therefore whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft.

Ashram Observances in Action, p. 58, Edn. 1955

CHAPTER 2
THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth—either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry —I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciated this theory when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect to the possessions held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of *his* own, viz., the power to work.

The question how many can be real trustees according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction. If you accept the principle of Ahimsa, you have to strive to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice.

Harijan, 3-6-1939, p. 145

I am not ashamed to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism, almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced Socialist or even Communist. But

our methods differ, our languages differ. My theory of trusteeship is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it... No other theory is compatible with non-violence.

Harijan, 16-12-1939, p. 376

Statutory Trusteeship

"You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership in their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?"

In answer Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day; hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for white men and their posterity. In these distinction lay the seed of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

Harijan, 23-2-1947, p. 39

As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and, therefore, without exploitation. The State would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it.

Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with Gram Panchayats, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above it is liable to prove a dead weight.

Harijan, 31-3-1946, pp. 63–64

CHAPTER 3
THE PROBLEM OF THE RICH

[Pierre Ceresole, Founder President of the International Voluntary Service, during his visit of India in 1935, expressed before Gandhiji some of his doubts about capitalism and non-violence as follows:]

"Could one lay down a rule of life for the wealthy? That is to say, could one define how much belongs to the rich and how much does not belong to them?"

"Yes," said Gandhiji, smiling. "Let the rich man take 5 per cent, or 10 per cent, or 15 per cent."

"But not 85 per cent?"

"Ah! I was thinking of going up to 25 per cent! But not even an exploiter must think of taking 85 per cent!"

Pierre Ceresole's tangible difficulty was how long one should wait in order to carry conviction to the rich man.

"That is where I disagree with the Communist," said Gandhiji. "With me the ultimate test is non-violence. We have always to remember that even we were one day in the same position as the wealthy man. It has not been an easy process with us and as we bore with ourselves, even so should we bear with others. Besides, I have no right to assume that I am right and he is wrong. I have to wait until I convert him to my *point* of view. In the meanwhile if he says, 'I am prepared to keep for myself 25 per cent and to give 75 per cent to charities,' I close with the offer. For I know that 75 per cent voluntarily given is better than 100 per cent surrendered at the point of bayonet, and by thus being satisfied with 75 per cent I render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. Non-violence must be the common factor between us.

"You may argue that a man who surrenders by compulsion today will voluntarily accept the position tomorrow. That, to my mind, is a remote possibility on which I should not care to build much. What is certain is that if I use violence today, I shall be doubtless faced with greater violence. With non-violence as the rule, life will no doubt be a series of compromises. But it is better than an endless series of clashes."

"How would you in a word describe the rich man's legitimate position?"

"That of a trustee. I know a number of friends who earn and spend for the poor and who do not regard

themselves as anything but trustees of their wealth."

"I too have a number of friends wealthy and poor. I do not possess wealth but accept money from my wealthy friends. How can I justify myself?"

"You will accept nothing for yourself personally. That is to say, you will not accept a cheque to go to Switzerland for a change but you will accept a lakh of rupees for wells for Harijans or for schools and hospitals for them. All self has got to be eliminated and the problem is simplified."

"But what about my personal expense?"

"You have to act on the principle that a labourer is worthy of his hire. You must not hesitate to accept your minimum wage. Everyone of us is doing the same thing. Bhansali's wage is just wheat flour and *neem* leaves. We cannot all be Bhansalis, but we can try to approximate to that life; Thus I will be satisfied with having my livelihood, but I must not ask a rich man to accommodate my son. My only concern is to keep my body and soul together so long as I serve the community."

"But so long as I draw that allowance from him, is it not my duty to remind him continually of the unenviableness of his position and to tell him that he must cease to be owner of all that he does not need for his bare living?"

"Oh yes, that is your duty."

"But there are wealthy and wealthy. There are some who may have made their pile from alcoholic traffic."

"Yes, you will certainly draw a line. But whilst you will not accept money from a brewer, I do not know what will happen if you have made an appeal for funds. Will you tell the people that only those who have justly earned

their money will pay? I would rather withdraw the appeal than expect any money on those terms. Who is to decide whether one is just or otherwise? And justice too is a relative term. If we will but ask ourselves, we will find that we have not been just all our lives. The Gita says in effect that everyone is tarred with the same brush; so rather than judge others, live in the world untouched or unaffected by it. Elimination of self is the secret."

"Yes, I see," said Pierre Ceresole, and remained silent for a few minutes. Then with a sigh he said: "But one sometimes finds himself in a most embarrassing position. I have met people in Bihar working from morning until evening for less than a couple of annas, sometimes less than an anna, and they have often told me that they would very much like to dispossess the wealthy around them of their ill-gotten gains. I have stood speechless before them by reminding them of you."

Harijan, 1-6-1935, pp. 121–22

Inherited Riches

Q. How is it possible to earn lakhs in a righteous way? Jamnalalji, the merchant prince, used to say it was not. Moreover, however careful a rich man is, he is bound to spend more on himself than his actual requirements merit. Therefore, why not lay more stress on *not* becoming wealthy than on trusteeship of riches?

A. The question is apt and has been put to me before. What Jamnalalji could have meant was in the Gita sense that every action is tainted. It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without consciously doing wrong. For example I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land. But I accept the proposition that it is better not

to desire wealth than to acquire it, and become its trustee. I gave up my own long ago, which should be proof enough of what I would like others to do. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed the desire for wealth? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service. It is true that generally the rich spend more on themselves than they need. But this can be avoided. Jamnalalji spent far less on himself than men of his own economic status and even than many middle-class men. I have come across innumerable rich persons who are stingy on themselves. For some it is a part of their nature to spend next to nothing on themselves, and they do not think that they acquire merit in so doing.

The same applies to the sons of the wealthy. Personally I do not believe in inherited riches. The well-to-do should educate and bring up their children so that they may learn how to be independent. The tragedy is that they do not do so. Their children do get some education, they even recite verses in praise of poverty, but they have no compunction about helping themselves to parental wealth. That being so, I exercise my common sense and advise what is practicable. Those of us, however, who consider it a duty to adopt poverty and believe in and desire economic equality may not be jealous of the rich but should exhibit real happiness in our poverty which others may emulate. The sad fact is that those who are thus happy are few and far between.

Harijan, 8-3-1942, p. 67

CHAPTER 4
RICHES NOT NECESSARILY IMPURE

Thus writes Shri Shankarrao Deo:

> In the last issue of *Harijan*, in your article 'A Deplorable Incident', you say to the rich: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." When I read this, the first question that arose in my mind was: Why first earn crores and then use them for society? As society today is constituted the means of earning crores are bound to be impure; and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantram*: तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः। because in the very process of earning crores by impure means the man's character is bound to be tainted or vitiated. And moreover you have always been emphasizing the purity of means. But I am afraid that there is a possibility of people misunderstanding that you are laying an emphasis here more on the ends than on the means.
>
> I request you to emphasize as much, if not more, the purity of means of earning money as on spending. If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect.

I must demur. Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches. For the purpose of my argument, I have assumed that private possession itself is not held to be impure. If I own a mining lease and

I tumble upon a diamond of rare value, I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means. This actually happened when Cullinan diamond, much more valuable than the Kohinoor, was found. Such instances can be easily multiplied. My argument was surely addressed to such men. I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandizement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice that moneyed men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः। is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour.

Harijan, 22-2-1942, p. 49

CHAPTER 5
ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved, naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day, unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good. I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence difficult to attain. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort.

Constructive Programme, Edn. 1948, p. 20–21

I have shown a better way than preaching. The constructive programme takes the country a long way towards the goal. This is the most auspicious time for it. The Charkha and the allied industries, if fully successful, practically abolish all inequalities, both social and economic. The rising consciousness of the strength which non-violence gives to the people, and their intelligent refusal to co-operate in their slavery must bring about equality.

Harijan, 25-1-1942, p. 16

The Socialists and Communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, 'When they get control over the State they will enforce equality.' Under my plan, the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so, I claim to be a foremost Communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.

Harijan, 31-3-1946, p. 64

"What exactly do you mean by economic equality," Gandhiji was asked at the Constructive Workers' Conference during his tour of Madras. Gandhiji's reply was that economic equality of his conception did not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs... For instance... the elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So the real meaning of economic

equality was: "To each according to his need". That was the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children that would be a violation of economic equality.

"Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen-the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief." He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessaries, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

Harijan, 31-3-1946, p. 63

CHAPTER 6
DOCTRINE OF EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture, any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to

realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their

possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is Ahimsa in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale on non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that Ahimsa is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult, is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming

possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples.

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of Ahimsa entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

Harijan, 25-8-1940, p. 260–1

CHAPTER 7
TRUSTEESHIP—NOT A LEGAL FICTION

Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed, if he is prepared to embrace death and renounce his body for the sake of human service. But that is true in theory only. In actual life, we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

Those who own money now, are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

Q. If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put up with it?

A. That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of the mankind.

Q. Why then not have State-ownership in place of private property and thus minimize violence?

A. It is better than private ownership. But that, too, is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the evils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

Q. Let us come to a specific instance. Suppose some artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one person's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense you would like to have him, do you not think that the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence?

A. Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary—with or without

compensation as the case demanded.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship, as, in my opinion, the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership.

While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress.

We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor.

The Modem Review, October, 1935, p. 412

CHAPTER 8

LABOUR SHOULD KNOW ITS STRENGTH

Q. How can workers obtain justice without violence? If capitalists use force to suppress their efforts, why should the workers not try to destroy their oppressors?

A. This of course is the old law, the law of the jungle—blow against blow; I am endeavouring to make the non-violent experiment, which I consider essential viz., that of getting rid of the law of the jungle which is ill-suited to man.

You may not know that I am supposed to be the Chief

Adviser of a Labour Union in a place called Ahmedabad which has commanded the unsolicited testimony of many labour experts, who have visited the place. Through this Labour Union, we have been endeavouring to enforce this method of non-violence in connection with questions arising between capital and labour for the past fifteen years. Therefore, what I am now about to tell you is based upon actual experience, in the very line about which the question has been asked. In my humble opinion labour can always vindicate itself if labour is sufficiently united and self-sacrificing. No matter how oppressive the capitalists may be, I am convinced that those who are connected with labour and guide the labour movement have themselves no idea of the resources that labour can command and which capital can never command. If labour would only understand and recognize that capital is perfectly helpless without labour, labour will immediately come to its own.

We have unfortunately come under the hypnotic suggestion and the hypnotic influence of capital, so that we have come to believe that capital is all in all on this earth. But a moment's thought would show that labour has at its disposal capital which the capitalists will never possess. Ruskin taught in his age that labour had unrivalled opportunities. But he spoke above our heads. At the present moment there is an Englishman, Sir Daniel Hamilton who is really making that very experiment. He is an economist. He is a capitalist also, but through his economic research and experiments he has come to the same conclusions as Ruskin had arrived at intuitively, and he has brought to labour a vital message. He says it is wrong to think that a piece of metal constitutes capital. He says it is wrong even to think that so much produce is capital, but he

adds that if we go to the very source, it is labour that is capital, and that living capital is inexhaustible. It is upon that law that we have been working in the Labour Union at Ahmedabad. It has been that law under which we have been working in our fight against the Government. It is that law, the recognition of which delivered 1,700,000 people in Champaran inside six months from a century-long tyranny. I must not tarry to tell you what that tyranny was, but those who are interested in that problem will be able to study every one of the facts that I have put before them. Now I will tell you what we have done. There is in English a very potent word, and you have it in French also, all the languages of the world have it-it is "No", and the secret that we have hit upon is that when capital wants labour to say "Yes", labour roars out "No", if it means "No". And immediately labour comes to recognize that it has got the choice before it of saying "Yes", when it wants to say "Yes" and "No", when it wants to say "No", labour is free of capital and capital has to woo labour. And it would not matter in the slightest degree that capital has guns and even poison gas at its disposal. Capital would still be perfectly helpless if labour would assert its dignity by making good its "No". Then labour does not need to retaliate but labour stands defiant receiving the bullets and poison gas and still insists upon its "No". The whole reason why labour so often fails is that instead of sterilizing capital as I have suggested, labour, (I am speaking as a labourer myself) wants to seize that capital and become capitalist itself in the worst sense of the term. And the capitalist therefore who is properly entrenched and organized, finding among the labourers also candidates for the same office, makes use of a portion of these to suppress

labour. If we really were not under this hypnotic spell, every-one of us, men and women, would recognize this rock-bottom truth without the slightest difficulty. Having proved it for myself, through a series of experiments carried on in different departments of life, I am speaking to you with authority (you will pardon me for saying so) that when I put this scheme before you, it was not as something superhuman but as something within the grasp of every labourer, man or woman. Again, you will see that what labour is called upon to do under this scheme of non-violence is nothing more than the Swiss soldier does under gun-fire or the ordinary soldier who is armed from top to toe is called upon to do. While he undoubtedly seeks to inflict death and destruction upon his adversary, he also carries his own life in his pocket. I want labour, then, to copy the courage of the soldier without copying the brute in the soldier, namely the ability to inflict death, and I suggest to you that a labourer who courts death and has the courage to die without even carrying arms, with no weapons of self-defence, shows a courage of a-much higher degree than a man who is armed from *top* to toe.

Young India, 14-1-1932, p. 17-8

CHAPTER 9

CHOICE BEFORE CAPITALISTS

They (zamindars and talukdars) must regard themselves, even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards the ryots. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours. At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the

grinding pauperism of the ryots in whose midst the former are living... If only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which today pass muster as villages, can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of the superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force, that a powerful Government can bring into play, can avert.

Young India, 5-12-1929, p. 396

I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it.

Harijan, 5-12-1936, p. 339

CHAPTER 10
THE NON-VIOLENT SANCTION

Q. What is the place of Satyagraha in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?

A. The same as against the foreign power. Satyagraha is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

The conditions necessary for the success of Satyagraha are: (1) The Satyagrahi should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent; (2) The issue must be true and substantial; (3) The Satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

Harijan, 31-3-1946, p. 64

Q. You say that a Raja, a zamindar or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today? Or do you expect them to be so transformed?

A. I think that some very few exist even today, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present Rajas and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When Panchayat Raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the Rajas can hold sway so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In Panchayat Raj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and the Panchayat can only work through the law of their making.

Harijan, 1-6-194-7, p. 172

CHAPTER 11
SOME QUESTIONS

Q. From your writings, one gathers the notion that your 'trustee' is not anything more than a very benevolent philanthropist and donor, such as the first Parsi Baronet, the Tatas, and Wadias, the Birlas, Shri Bajaj and the like. Is that so? Will you please explain whom you regard as the primary or rightful beneficiaries of the possessions of a rich man? Is there to be a limit to the amount or part of the income and capital which he can spend upon himself, his kith and kin and for non-public purposes? Can one who exceeds such limit be prevented from doing so? If he is incompetent or otherwise fails to discharge his obligations as a trustee, can he be removed and called upon to render accounts by a beneficiary or the State? Do the same principles apply to princes and zamindars, or is their trusteeship of a different nature?

A. If the trusteeship idea catches, philanthropy, as we know it, will disappear. Of those you have named only Jamnalalji came near, but only near it. A trustee has no heir but the public. In a State built on the basis of non-violence, the commission of trustees will be regulated. Princes and zamindars will be on a par with the other men of wealth.

Harijan, 12-4-1942, p. 116

Q. Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence whether open or tacit?

A. Such accumulation by private persons was impossible except through violent means but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society was not only possible, it

was desirable and inevitable.

Q. Whether a man accumulates material or moral wealth, he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

A. No, he has no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State?

A. Choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

Q. When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may of course derive their final authority from State-made laws?

A. That question involved some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vested in the trustee, not in the State. It was to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship came into play retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor did he, the speaker, hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would for the most part be based on non-violence.

Harijan, 16-2-1947, p. 25

CHAPTER 12
NOT WAITING TILL GREEK KALENDS

(BY PYARELAL)

During our last detention at Poona in 1942, I had the opportunity to discuss at length with Gandhiji various aspects of his ideal of trusteeship, and how it could be realized in our present-day world. In the course of our talk one day he remarked: "The only democratic way of achieving it today is by cultivating opinion in its favour."

I put it to him that perhaps the reason why he had presented trusteeship basis to the owning class was that while non-violence could command many sacrifices from the people, it was not reasonable to expect anyone to present his own head in a charger. "So instead of asking the owning class to do the impossible, you presented them with a reasonable and practicable alternative."

Gandhiji: I refuse to admit that non-violence knows any limit to the sacrifice that it can demand or command. The doctrine of trusteeship stands on its own merits.

Pyarelal: Surely, you do not mean that the change would depend upon the sufferance of the owning class and we shall have to wait till their conversion is complete? If social transformation is effected by a slow, gradual process, it will kill the revolutionary fervour which an abrupt break with the past creates. That is why our Marxist friends say that a true social revolution can come only through a proletarian dictatorship. You too have taught us that in politics reformism

kills revolution. Does this not equally apply to social change? Anyway, if non-violence has the power to induce the opponent even to immolate himself for the sake of a higher principle, as you maintain that it can, why cannot we get the owning class to renounce their vast possessions? You concede that vast possessions are today largely the result of exploitation? Why bring in trusteeship? Many people honestly believe, it will prove to be no more than a make-believe. Or is it that, after all, there is a limit to the power of non-violence?

Gandhiji: Perhaps you have the example of Russia in mind. Wholesale expropriation of the owning class and distribution of its assets among the people there did create a tremendous amount of revolutionary fervour. But I claim that ours will be an even bigger revolution. We must not underrate the business talent and know-how which the owning class have acquired through generations of experience and specialization. Free use of it would accrue to the people under my plan. So long as we have no power, conversion is our weapon by necessity, but after we get power, conversion will be our weapon of choice. Conversion must precede legislation. Legislation in the absence of conversion remains a dead letter. As an illustration, we have today the power to enforce rules of sanitation but we can do nothing with it because the public is not ready.

Pyarelal: You say conversion must precede reform. Whose conversion? If you mean the conversion of the people, they are ready even today. If, on the other hand, you mean that of the owning class, we may as well wait till the Greek Kalends.

Gandhiji: I mean the conversion of both.

Noting the look of surprise on my face, he proceeded:

You see, if the owning class does not accept the trusteeship basis voluntarily, its conversion must come under the pressure of public opinion. For that public opinion is not yet sufficiently organized.

Going back to what he had said only a little while ago, I asked: "What do you mean by power?"

Gandhiji: By power I mean voting power for the people—so broad-based that the will of the majority can be given effect to.

Pyarelal: Can the masses at all come into power by parliamentary activity?

Gandhiji: Not by parliamentary activity *alone.* My reliance ultimately is on the power of non-violent non-co-operation, which I have been trying to build up for the last twenty-two years.

Pyarelal: Is the capture of power possible through non-violence? Our Socialist friends say that they have now been convinced of the matchless potency of non-violence—up to a point. But they say, they do not see how it can enable the people to seize power. You also have said the same thing. Therein, argue the Socialists, lies the inadequacy of non-violence.

Gandhiji: In a way they are right. By its very nature, non-violence cannot 'seize' power, nor can that be its goal. *But non-violence can do more; it can effectively control and guide power* without capturing the machinery of government. That is its beauty. There is an exception of course. If the non-violent non-co-operation of the people is so complete that the administration ceases to function or if the administration crumbles under

the impact of a foreign invasion and a vacuum results, the people's representatives will then step in and fill it. Theoretically that is possible.

It reminded me of what Gandhiji had once told Mirabehn: "Non-violence does not seize power. It does not even seek power; power accrues to it."

Continuing his argument Gandhiji said: "Moreover, I do not agree that government cannot be carried on except by the use of violence."

Pyarelal: Does not the very concept of the State imply the use of power?

Gandhiji: Yes. But the use of power need not necessarily be violent. A father wields power over his children; he may even punish but not by inflicting violence. The most effective exercise of power is that which irks least. Power rightly exercised must sit light as a flower; no one should feel the weight of it. The people accepted the authority of the Congress willingly. I was on more than one occasion invested with the absolute power of dictatorship. But everybody knew that my power rested on their willing acceptance. They could set me aside at any time and I would have stepped aside without a murmur. In the Khilafat days my authority, or the authority of the Congress, did not irk anybody. The Ali Brothers used to call me *Sarkar.* Yet they knew they had me in their pocket. What was true about me or the Congress then can be true about the government also.

I conceded that a non-violent State or even a non-violent minority dictatorship—a dictatorship resting on the moral authority of a few—was possible in theory. But it called for a terrible self-discipline, self-denial and

penance. In the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavata, there is the description of a non-violent law-giver or head of a State. He is a person who has severed all domestic ties; he is unaffected by fear or favour, anger or attachment; he is the personification of humility and self-effacement. Through constant discipline he has inured his body to all conceivable rigours of the weather, fatigue and want. But suppose, the author poses the question, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. If through old age or illness his constitution is undermined so that he can no longer withstand the rigours of his penance, what then? To that hypothetical question the unrelenting answer given is: Let him in that event mount a pyre which he himself has made and immolate himself rather than indulge in weak self-pity and molly-coddle himself. "Personally I agree," I concluded, "that such a person alone is fit to be a dictator under non-violence. If anyone is frightened by such a description, let him look at the Russians fighting in temperatures below 40 degrees frost. Why should we expect a softer solution under non-violence? Rather we should be prepared for more hardships."

Gandhiji confirmed that under non-violence people have to be prepared for heavier sacrifices if only because the good aimed at is higher. "There is no short-cut to salvation," he said.

"That would mean," interpolated my sister, "that only a Jesus, a Mohammad or a Buddha can be the head of a non-violent State."

Gandhiji demurred. "That is not correct. Prophets and supermen are born only once in an age. But if even a single individual realizes the ideal of Ahimsa in its fullness, he covers and redeems the whole society. Once Jesus

had blazed the trail, his twelve disciples could carry on his mission without his presence. It needed the perseverance and genius of so many generations of scientists to discover the laws of electricity but today everybody, even children, use electric power in their daily life. Similarly, it will not always need a perfect being to administer an ideal State, once it has come into being. What is needed is a thorough social awakening to begin with. The rest will follow. To take an instance nearer home, I have presented to the working class the truth that true capital is not silver or gold but the labour of their hands and feet and their intelligence. Once labour develops that awareness, it would not need my presence to enable it to make use of the power that it will release."

He ended up by saying that if only we could make people conscious of their power—the power of non-violent non-co-operation—the realization of the ideal of trusteeship would follow as surely as morning follows night.

Towards New Horizons, pp. 90–93

CHAPTER 13
PRACTICAL TRUSTEESHIP FORMULA

(BY PYARELAL)

On our release from prison, we took up the question where we had left it in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp. Kishorlalbhai and Naraharibhai joined in drawing up a simple, practical trusteeship formula. It was placed before Bapu who made a few changes in it. The final draft read as follows:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
4. Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society.
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person

in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

Harijan, 25-10-1952

तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः।

Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it.

Expanded it means: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society."

This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

from *Harijan*, 1-2-1942, p. 20

ISBN: 978-81-7229-091-7

9 788172 290917

₹ 10